

REMARKS

The Examiner is thanked for the thorough review and consideration of the pending application. The Office Action dated November 12, 2008 has been received and its contents have been carefully reviewed.

Summary of the Office Action

Claims 1-2 stand rejected under 35. U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over *Chang* (US 6,695,194) in view of *Takagi* (US 6,846,022). Claim 3 stands rejected under 35. U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over *Chang* in view of *Takagi*, and further in view of *Yamada et al.* (US 4,909,419). Claim 4 stands rejected under 35. U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over *Chang* in view of *Takagi* and *Yamada et al.*, and further in view of *Mukoyama et al.* (US 6,145,727).

Summary of the Response to the Office Action

Applicants have amended independent claim 1 and added a new claim. Accordingly, claims 1-5 are pending in this application for further consideration. Applicants respectfully request favorable reconsideration in view of the remarks presented herein.

All Claims Define Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 1-2 stand rejected under 35. U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over *Chang* (US 6,695,194) in view of *Takagi* (US 6,846,022). Claim 3 stands rejected under 35. U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over *Chang* in view of *Takagi*, and further in view of *Yamada et al.* (US 4,909,419). Claim 4 stands rejected under 35. U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over *Chang* in view of *Takagi* and *Yamada et al.*, and further in view of *Mukoyama et al.* (US 6,145,727).

With respect to independent claim 1, as amended, Applicants respectfully submit that *Chang* in view of *Takagi* does not teach a combination comprising at least the feature of “wherein an outer diameter of the one end of the plug portion is smaller than an inner diameter of the third opening.” The Examiner asserts that *Takagi* discloses the plug portion and the intermediate sleeve. However, in *Takagi*, the intermediate sleeve (203) is partially accommodated within the plug portion (201). Therefore, *Takagi* fails to teach or suggest that “an outer diameter of the one end of the plug portion is smaller than an inner diameter of the third opening.” Furthermore, *Yamada et al.* and *Mukoyama et al.*, whether taken alone or in combination, do not overcome the deficiencies discussed above of *Chang* and *Takagi*.

As pointed out M.P.E.P. § 2143 (A), a finding must be made that the prior art includes each element claimed to establish *prima facie* obviousness of a claimed invention. Because *Chang*, *Takagi*, *Yamada et al.* and *Mukoyama et al.*, whether taken alone or in combination, fail to teach or suggest each feature of independent claim 1, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) should be withdrawn.

Furthermore, claims 2-4 depend from allowable independent claim 1. Applicants respectfully assert that claims 2-4 are also allowable at least because of the additional features they recite and the reasons stated above.

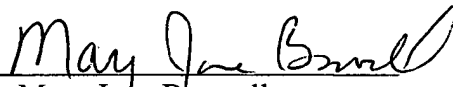
CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request entry of the above amendments, reconsideration, and the timely allowance of the pending claims. Should the Examiner believe that there are any issues outstanding after consideration of this Response, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' undersigned representative to expedite prosecution.

If there are any other fees due in connection with the filing of this response, please charge the fees to our Deposit Account No. 50-0310. If a fee is required for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136 not accounted for above, such an extension is requested and the fee should also be charged to our Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,

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